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3. *Reports of the Commissioner of Patents, for the Years 1849 and 1850. Part II. Agriculture.* Congressional Documents. Washington.

THE first of these documents deserves favorable notice from those who are interested in the subject to which it relates. Though much smaller in bulk, it contains more that will be read, and be useful to the reader, than any of its predecessors. The compiler, instead of inserting in full every communication received, has abridged what would admit of abridgment, and published only what would, in his judgment, be useful. By much disagreeable labor, he has saved more than was paid for the work by reducing the cost of printing; and has, moreover, given us a more readable book.

At the beginning of the volume are placed several essays, by Dr. Daniel Lee, on subjects relating to Agriculture, the most important of which, in his opinion, if we may judge from his earnestness in discussing it, and in our opinion certainly, is the deterioration of the soil in this country, by the modes of cultivation pursued by our planters and farmers. He startles us, by estimating the annual waste of the fertile elements in our soil at an amount sufficient to produce a thousand millions of bushels of corn. This estimate he founds on a calculation made with the evident desire to reduce the loss to the lowest probable amount. From a work on American husbandry, published in London, in 1775, he extracts, in confirmation of his conclusions, the statement that "on good lands about Albany, they sow two bushels of wheat on an acre, and reap from twenty to forty; from twenty to thirty, are common; and with such bad husbandry as would not yield the like in England. This is owing to the richness and freshness of the soil." Dr. Lee then remarks that, in 1845, according to the State census, Albany county produced, on an average, only seven and a half bushels per acre; and four other counties, on Hudson river, produced only from five to eight bushels. In such has been, and continues to be, the progress of deterioration elsewhere, it is quite time that all who care for the future of our country should bestir themselves to arrest it. And what are these fertilizing elements of the soil annually wasted in such alarming quantity? They are the acids and alkalies existing there from the beginning in very small proportions, but which are essential to the growth of vegetables, and to the formation of the perfect animal, whether man or beast. They are drawn from the soil by plants, become a part of them, and ought to be returned to the ground in order to preserve its fertility; but a large

portion of them are carried to the cities in the form of grain and meat; another portion, having become soluble by entering into the organization of plants, sink deep into the earth where they are useless, or are transported by springs and rivers to the ocean. Thus, in time, the quantity or proportion remaining becomes too small to give vigor to vegetation, or to form a plant adapted to the nourishment of man.

The Report for 1850 deserves as much commendation as the one which preceded it. It contains several essays on agricultural topics, of which one is on the Origin of Soils, one on the Elements of Fertility, and another on the Philosophy of Improving Soils,—all contributed by Dr. Lee, and all, we doubt not, deserving of general perusal. These annual documents necessarily contain a multitude of facts and principles relating to many different subjects, thrown in without much regard to relationship or juxtaposition. We hope that they will hereafter be furnished with indices, or enlarged tables of contents, which will assist those who consult them in the task of finding what they particularly want; for very few will undertake to read them from beginning to end.

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4. *Celebrated Saloons*, by MADAME GAY; and *Parisian Letters*, by MADAME GIRARDIN. Translated from the French, by L. WILLARD. Boston: Crosby & Nichols. 1851. 16mo. pp. 260.

THESE very lively sketches could not have been written anywhere else on earth than in Paris, or by any other writer than an accomplished *Parisienne*. They are intensely French, and intensely Parisian. They can hardly be understood in any other place than their native city; perhaps not even there, at the present day; for they belong to Paris such as it was,—the home of a brilliant court, and of the wits, the men of fashion and of letters, and the celebrated women, who made that court brilliant. *Nous avons changé tout cela*. The republican Paris which dates from February, 1848, has little in common with its splendid predecessor; it has not even the dignity of danger, as it had during the Reign of Terror. It is a poor copy, a feeble caricature, of the Paris which was rendered memorable by Danton and Robespierre, by Madame de Stael and Napoleon. It bears about as much resemblance to it as its Prince-President, a dandy with a big name, bears to his terrible uncle. No; even under the latest dynasty, under the *bourgeois* king, the gay capital of France was